COVID-19 and the Haworth College of Business

Haworth College of Business

Follow this and additional works at: https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/business_news

Part of the Business Commons, and the Higher Education Commons

WMU ScholarWorks Citation
https://scholarworks.wmich.edu/business_news/118

This Newsletter is brought to you for free and open access by the Haworth College of Business at ScholarWorks at WMU. It has been accepted for inclusion in Haworth College of Business News by an authorized administrator of ScholarWorks at WMU. For more information, please contact wmu-scholarworks@wmich.edu.
COVID-19 and the Haworth College of Business

During these challenging times, the Haworth College of Business is thinking about you and your families, and we hope that you take every precaution to stay safe. As we follow the guidelines issued by federal, state and local authorities, we are also studying the impact of COVID-19 on our communities, and helping students navigate the transition to distance learning, graduation and starting their careers. Responding to this challenge provides the opportunity to support each other and focus on the wellbeing of our students. This special edition newsletter highlights some of those moments.

Supply chain alum helps drive GM’s efforts to produce ventilators

Michael Schwandt, B.B.A.'13, is part of a team at GM that is leading a collaboration with Ventec Life Systems to produce life-saving respiratory care products. Read about the collaboration.

Leading through crisis

Students in the leadership and business strategy program learned firsthand how to adapt in a pandemic. They pivoted during the spring semester to create 50 videos that highlight Michigan businesses hurt by the coronavirus. See their strategies.
Introducing The Jungle podcast

Interested in learning more about leading during the COVID-19 pandemic? Check out The Jungle, a podcast hosted by leadership and business strategy faculty that focuses on how executives and other leaders are navigating uncertain times. Read about the podcast.

Why are store shelves out of products like toilet paper?

Supply chain expert Tom Kelly explains how changes to consumer behavior and the disruption to global supply chains amidst the pandemic are affecting product availability. Read about the effects.

Distance education: You do you

Being authentic and accessible is something that students appreciate about faculty and staff members, and these qualities are even more important when teaching and providing services in a virtual environment. Read how faculty are making it work.
Getting career-ready during a pandemic

Students are looking to staff at the Zhang Career Center to guide them through internship and job searches, and are seeking out opportunities to build their portfolio of skills.
Read how the center is helping.

Six steps to survive a financial crisis

Todd Mora, program manager for the Sanford Center for Financial Planning and Wellness, offers advice for navigating and surviving an unforeseen financial crisis.
Read about the steps.

Serving the community through Meals on Wheels

Business student Zachary Spiegla shares his experience volunteering with Meals on Wheels during the pandemic.
Read his story.
WMU supply chain alum helps drive GM’s efforts to produce ventilators

Contact: Stacey Markin
April 21, 2020

DETROIT—Creating a complete supply chain within 72 hours. That is what the team at General Motors did after being contacted by StopTheSpread.org, a coalition of volunteer CEOs working to unlock the collective potential of U.S. businesses to catalyze action in response to COVID-19.
That initial conversation led to a collaboration with Ventec Life Systems. The goal: to increase production of Ventec’s respiratory care products to support the growing fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

Answering the call were a lead engineer and three global purchasing and supply chain leads. Michael Schwandt, B.B.A.’13, is part of that team, and doing the most challenging and meaningful work of his career.

“Although developing a supply chain under crisis conditions is not new to GM, the COVID-19 pandemic presents a new challenge due to the extremely short timeline,” says Schwandt. “The immense pressure of the pandemic adds a high degree of personal commitment. Success under these circumstances entails crucial resource management, creativity and collaboration.”

The core purchasing and supply chain team kicked the project off on a Friday, seeking to identify and source suppliers by Sunday night. After establishing a supply chain, the team created a plan to address critical issues such as low supply, bottlenecks and more. Many parts needed alternative suppliers, while other core assemblies did not have alternate sources, so the current suppliers required support to scale capacity. Within 72 hours, the team had developed plans to source 100% of the necessary parts.

“GM identified a key subset of traditional ventilator suppliers who wanted to aid our efforts to increase capacity, knowing resources were constrained,” says Schwandt. “GM’s strengths in handling crises, creating unique solutions, and having the ability to allocate experts allowed this ramp up to be remarkable. GM immediately dispatched supplier quality engineers from around the world to support these suppliers to increase capacity under such high demand. In one case, GM’s supply chain organization was able to increase capacity by 25 times the supplier’s prior build plan.”
GM recently received an order to deliver 30,000 units from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, working with Ventec and other partners. “With this effort, success was measured in minutes rather than hours,” says Schwandt.

A 24-7 workweek is what Schwandt signed up for when he volunteered for the project.

“"This is the most important endeavor I have been involved with in my professional career. Everyone on this team is working around the clock in order to give back to our communities. Whether it’s for our family members who are working on the front lines in hospitals, a friend who has contracted COVID-19, or a colleague who has lost a loved one, each of us is affected by this pandemic. We are all working toward a common goal to beat COVID-19 and save lives. Having an impact on this fight keeps the team going. Together, one day at a time, our collective efforts will help overcome this pandemic."

Center for Principled Leadership and Business Strategy launches new podcast, 'The Jungle'

Contact: Molly Goaley
April 29, 2020

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Grab your earbuds, because the Center for Principled Leadership and Business Strategy at Western Michigan University has launched another method for tuning into the business world while sheltering in place.
"The Jungle," a podcast that aims to explore the wild and exciting side of business through thoughtful conversations with executives and other leaders, is now available through a variety of listening platforms. Hosts Dr. Doug Lepisto and Dr. Derrick McIver, faculty members and co-directors of the center, provide an up-close, unvarnished view into the emotions, practices and lived experiences of leading and strategy formation.

With 11 episodes available for streaming by mid-May, the podcast is currently examining how businesses and their leaders are navigating the uncertainty surrounding the COVID-19 pandemic.

"'Unprecedented' and 'unknown' are two words we often hear during this current crisis," says Lepisto. "The novelty of this situation raises a fundamental question: How do you create a path forward and lead others down that path? We want to take listeners up close to hear how great leaders attempt to do this."

Featured guests include John Bryant, former chairman and CEO of the Kellogg Company; Alessandro P. DiNello, B.B.A.'75, president and CEO of Flagstar Bank and Flagstar Bancorp; Dr. Edward Montgomery, WMU president; Patti Poppe, president and CEO of Consumers Energy, and many others.

"We wanted to get a candid look inside leadership and strategy from different vantage points across a broad spectrum of industries," says McIver. "The current times provide a rare opportunity to delve into how leaders deal with the uncertainties of running organizations. Each episode is intended to be a learning experience for listeners."
ABOUT THE CENTER FOR PRINCIPLED LEADERSHIP AND BUSINESS STRATEGY

The Center for Principled Leadership and Business Strategy at the WMU Haworth College of Business believes the path to purpose and profit is found in creating genuine value for others. Making this a reality in business requires leadership and strategic thinking to maximize benefits across stakeholders.

The center serves students, executives and the West Michigan business community by providing deeply immersive opportunities that combine education and professional business experience. Center faculty undertake large-scale consulting projects and executive mentorship for students, design "learning spaces of the future" and support students in acquiring and operating small businesses.

Why are store shelves out of products like toilet paper? WMU expert says it comes down to continuing to improve supply chain

Contact: Molly Goaley
April 20, 2020

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—Spending time at home versus school or the office during the COVID-19 pandemic means Americans are significantly increasing their use of everyday household items. But why, with a drive in demand, are grocery store shelves still consistently wiped out of products like toilet paper? Western Michigan University supply chain expert Tom
Kelly explains how changes to consumer behavior and the disruption to global supply chains amidst the novel coronavirus pandemic play a role.

Kelly, an instructor in the Haworth College of Business integrated supply management program, identifies key reasons stores are struggling to keep widely used items in stock.

“There are a number of factors impacting the level of inventory we see in stores,” he says. “The main concern is exposure to the virus. Reducing exposure has changed the way we purchase products and how much we buy. Many people are limiting their public activities like shopping to every other week, which means they will buy two weeks’ supply of product at a time. This in turn makes shelves look less full, and people start to get concerned about the availability of a product and buy more, just in case.”

STOCKING UP ON STAPLES

Kelly adds that limiting exposure to the virus has also changed what consumers purchase.

“Prior to the pandemic, we all had certain products at home to keep us safe and healthy,” he says. “With new recommended protocols from the Center for Disease Control, we are now consuming more of these products faster, which results in spikes in demand.”

Nielsen data revealed hand sanitizer sales were up over 470%, and aerosol disinfectant product sales shot up 385% the week ending March 7. The following weeks saw spikes in household paper products, with Nielsen reporting that bath tissue, facial tissue and paper towels all saw triple-digit sales increases during the week that ended March 14.

“To increase production to these levels, companies have to add significant resources and capacity—everything from people to equipment,” Kelly says. “Sourcing these resources takes time.”

CHANGING HABITS

Adding to the lack of availability in stores is the fact that, before the pandemic, many of the products consumers use daily were provided by other organizations.

“Prior to this event, most people would spend 8 to 10 hours outside the home,” Kelly says. “When we are out of the house, other organizations supply many of the products we need. When we are at work, how often do we drink the company coffee?” This in turn affects buying habits, he says.
“We now have to change our purchasing habits to include items others might supply. By themselves, these changes might not create shortages. We are still drinking the same amount of coffee as we did at work. However, what has changed is the distribution network that gets the coffee to the consumer. Businesses usually buy their products through wholesalers, but we buy our coffee through retailers. To meet the need, the coffee has to be rerouted and maybe even repackaged to the retailer so that we can access it.”

Getting product from the factory, to the warehouse, to the store, to the consumer—all while limiting exposure to the virus—poses challenges to logistics activity, Kelly explains.

“We are seeing major adaptations to this process. For example, we continue to see double-digit growth in online purchases and increased use of specialty delivery services for restaurants to reduce possible contact. These are all short-term solutions to increase product availability.”

DELIVERING ON DEMAND

Kelly says any of the factors mentioned could create some disruption in the availability of products. But together, they are driving the shortages consumers are seeing in day-to-day retail experiences.

“The important takeaway is that supply chains will need to work with all functions within an organization—sales, operations, customer service—to determine what will be ‘normal’ going forward and what they will need to deliver in order to meet demand,” he says. “I can’t emphasize enough how important it is for supply chain professionals to use this event as an opportunity to improve their processes. Supply chain is about delivering value to the company and the customer. We must meet customer expectations and at the same time reduce risk. Continuing to reflect on and improve processes will drive that success.”
Dr. Alan Rea, professor of business information systems, and Dr. Marcel Zondag, associate professor of marketing, delivered to business faculty and staff as WMU moved to distance education in March. Rea is one of the most experienced faculty members on campus when it comes to online learning, teaching fully online or hybrid courses and using different means of instruction and tools. Likewise, Zondag has often taught in a hybrid format and uses an advanced cloud-based simulation in one of his courses, as well as other tools.

The team got business faculty and staff up and running with both Microsoft Teams and WebEx and provided advice on best practices in Elearning, continuing to mentor individuals as they encountered their own unique challenges and successes in courses, advising sessions and more.

“As we finish our semester, choosing the technology that best supports how you teach is my advice to faculty,” says Rea. “If you are better recording your lectures with Mediasite and uploading them for students to watch asynchronously, do that. If you want to livestream and record with WebEx, do that. The content and connections faculty have with students are the most important element to maintain in this challenging time. None of us
expected this, so working with students to help them learn the most necessary course content is the key. Moving content online in such a short period of time causes you to simplify. For those of us teaching in the first summer semester, we now know that our courses will be delivered using distance education, which gives us the opportunity to incorporate more tools for our students. We all get better at this with practice.”

“Technology is your friend,” says Zondag. “Granted, it’s a difficult friend, that sometimes bothers you and tends to ‘flake out’ on you, but at the end of the day, it’s a valuable tool to enhance the educational experience for our students, improve their learning, and prepare them much better for the business reality they will face after graduation. The opportunity for self-paced learning, immediate feedback and alternative formats of knowledge transfer is wonderful. The best advice is probably to give yourself some time—which we all know is in short supply—to play around with the different platforms we have at our disposal. See what you like for your needs, and don’t be afraid to not use certain technology that does not work for you. Communicate your experiences with your colleagues, so we all learn from each other.”

Advice for students

Students are getting to know faculty teaching styles in a completely different context during the shift to distance education, and looking at how core course content is being delivered is what Rea wants students to focus on. “If a professor is posting videos with course content, make sure to take the time to watch them. If a professor is livestreaming during class time, make the effort to attend as many sessions as possible. However, the most important thing is to ask questions just like you would in the classroom. Perhaps more! Professors want to help you learn, and we are doing our best to keep that happening.”
Patience and communication are the elements that Zondag identifies in order to maintain the best learning environment for the end of semester push. “Understand that this immediate switch to distance learning is a detour for all of us and much of the course content wasn’t designed for online delivery and assessment. But, embrace the challenge and do not be afraid to provide your professors with constructive criticism on how you think the experience can improve going forward. As faculty members, we can learn much from our students’ experience. It is almost like we were all thrown in one large unexpected higher education experiment. What we learn from it is the real test for all of us.”

Where are we going from here?

“Although most faculty and students will not want to move to a completely online teaching environment, I think faculty members will find approaches that might allow for a richer teaching experience overall,” says Rea. “Perhaps faculty see that online office hours allow more students to ‘drop in’ and visit, since they do not need to get to campus to do so. Staff might see that a quick video conference can take the place of occasional face-to-face meetings. Students who were not as comfortable talking in class may find a new voice online. I hope that everyone realizes that education can be enhanced with technology, rather than seeing technology as a barrier to learning.”

Zondag agrees. “You cannot replicate some experiences, and the value that comes from them, online. However, in general, business education lends itself to technology-supported distance teaching for most of our fields of study. Of course, the strength of the Haworth College of Business comes from the relationships between students, faculty and staff—no matter how we interact. Going forward, we may well see a switch to using more distance learning strategies, but we cannot underestimate the in-class, personal part of our curriculum delivery or the connection that stems from that.”

Rea and Zondag have both been appointed faculty champions for the summer I semester, where they will facilitate the acceleration of the course development process by hosting virtual training sessions on a variety of topics.

Getting career-ready during a pandemic

Contact: Stacey Markin
April 8, 2020

KALAMAZOO, Mich.—How do you prepare for your career when in-person contact is no longer an option? That is a question that many students are learning to answer creatively with assistance from the staff at the Zhang Career Center.

As WMU moved to distance education, staff members in the career center shifted to remote advising appointments and offering instruction on topics like building a professional resume, LinkedIn profile best practices, business etiquette and others via video.
“Pivoting to remote advising and delivery of career development content has been a challenge, but a challenge our team was ready to take on for our students,” says **Bob Stewart**, career development specialist. “In times of crisis, people’s true colors show. I am very proud of our immediate and efficient response to this situation and believe that we will continue to provide the best career development education and opportunities for our students, albeit remotely.”

Students appreciate the ability to connect with career advisors and tap into their expertise in a time of uncertainty. “Lately, things have have felt anything but normal,” says first-year business student **Jacob Myers**. “I can’t thank the Zhang Career Center team enough for making this transition easier. The career center’s online services, such as resume critiques, practice interviews, and assistance with job and internship searches, is beyond beneficial. With many students—including myself—worried about our futures, it has been helpful and reassuring to have the opportunity to talk with the amazing career advisors. The seamless switch to virtual appointments and total support of students during this transition has been just what we needed.”

While economic and hiring uncertainties are realities that graduates are facing, there is an opportunity to frame recent student experiences with distance education, collaboration, technology and evolving expectations in a way that employers can appreciate.

“All students going through this pandemic are strengthening their ability to be adaptable, handle adversity and cope with stress,” says **Jessica Sonnenberg-Ward**, career development specialist. “Quickly acclimating to the expectations of distance learning enhances time management skills, confidence in technical abilities and personal drive. These are just a few examples of how this unprecedented time allows us to each grow as human beings.”

Amidst the move to distance education, the Zhang Career Center has been managing the expectations around its Business Externship Program—one of the single biggest career exploration opportunities that students early in the B.B.A. program experience.
“Our staff really had to go the extra mile with our Business Externship Program,” says Geralyn Heystek, director of the Zhang Career Center. “Workshops that are usually in-person were held using WebEx. In addition, Bob and Jessica have developed an Elearning site for the program. Originally planned as a pilot project for this year, the Elearning site became top priority very quickly. Within the site, students can submit preparation work for the program, attendance at workshops can be tracked, and quizzes and other accountability tools are available.

Though the exact ways that students will connect with these businesses over summer are still being discussed, many businesses are willing to schedule visits to their companies in later summer or fall, pending that ability, and all have expressed willingness to share content virtually and continue to connect with students for mentorship.

The staff members in the career center are working remotely every day to ensure that students have the very best information in getting career-ready.

What are the top questions that students are asking their career advisors as they work to build their professional brand during this time?

The Top Five Questions and Answers

1. **How do I make career advisor appointments?**
   We have electronic appointments available for students and alumni daily! Our preference is to meet through WebEX or Microsoft Teams, but we will accommodate anyone without video capability. To schedule an appointment, call (269) 387-2711 or visit [https://lnkd.in/epP8EDZ](https://lnkd.in/epP8EDZ).

2. **How do I know if my internship or job is still going to happen?**
   It is important that students with upcoming internships or jobs communicate openly via email or phone to discuss this issue with employers. Make sure to read every email from employers very carefully. It is fine to ask employers what the plan is, but remember that many companies are still trying to adapt to the changing dynamics brought on by COVID-19. When responding, students should practice professionalism in their email responses and not show frustration. This situation is new for everyone, and every organization is doing their best to accommodate students in this situation. Students: Be patient, be responsive and show gratitude.

3. **Is the Business Externship Program still going to happen?**
   The Zhang Career Center is working individually with the over 50 companies that are part of the Business Externship Program to adapt the program to meet all guidelines recommended by the state of Michigan. This means that companies have the option to adapt their program on an individual basis. Some companies are postponing site visits, some are doing virtual one-on-one mentorship and others are creating tailored virtual experiences. Once we have more information on how employers are adapting their experiences, all students participating in the program will be notified.
4. **How do I make the most of a virtual internship?**

   This is a question that students should be asking themselves. The answer is complex. Many companies are switching from in-person internships to virtual internships. This will be a challenge for both employers and students, but it is an extraordinary opportunity for students and their professional growth. Virtual internships, like distance learning, will come with a different set of challenges. It will be necessary for students to be able to use web platforms that support conference meetings like WebEx and Zoom.

   Companies will be using a variety of platforms, which students will need to become familiar with quickly. Students need to treat this style of internship just as they would the traditional in-person experience. This means showing up on time every day, meeting deadlines for tasks, communicating in a comprehensive and professional manner, and taking on as much as they can handle. The opportunity is in the ability to perform at a high level with the challenging hurdles brought by COVID-19. Students have a chance to stand out from the crowd through their work ethic and communication. Virtual internships and remote work were already embraced by many companies, and possibly will be a norm that will continue at all companies after the novel coronavirus is under control. Students that step up and respond well in virtual internships will be first choices for future virtual career opportunities.

5. **What can I be doing during the pandemic to enhance my job search and job search materials?**

   First, we want students to be taking care of themselves holistically during this time. That means getting exercise, good nutrition, adequate sleep, taking breaks, meditating, and connecting virtually with family and friends. Take care of your body and take care of your mind. Do the things you need to cope with the anxiety that might arise from stress from the pandemic. Once you have a good schedule in place for taking care of yourself, we recommend doing an upgrade to your LinkedIn and Handshake profile accounts. Improve your resume by having it reviewed by one of our career advisors. Consider how adapting to all the change caused by COVID-19 has enhanced you as a professional. Use Big Interview to practice your interviewing skills.
Six steps to survive a financial crisis

BY TODD MORA, PROGRAM MANAGER, SANFORD CENTER FOR FINANCIAL PLANNING AND WELLNESS

Step 1: Don’t Panic

It’s the cliché in every movie, television show, and blog post about crises: “Don’t Panic.” I can remember years ago when my twin boys were about four-years-old, and we went to visit their grandparents. We went to a large park to let them play. My wife, parents, daughter and one of my sons were all enjoying themselves when I looked down and suddenly realized that my other son Spenser was not with us. I looked frantically around the play structure for Spenser. My wife started calling out his name. My daughter who was seven became very upset. I realized that we were becoming panicked and weren’t going to find Spenser if we didn’t slow down and think. I looked over to the large group of children and parents at the soccer field and thought someone there might have seen Spenser. Sure enough, I walk over to the field and there was a mom holding Spenser’s hand and walking him around to find his parents. I thanked her profusely and asked Spenser why he left us. His response, “I wanted to play soccer.”

The ability to suspend fear and anxiety in times of crisis is critical to being able to formulate a strategy. Find the tools that work to alleviate your fear—deep breathing, counting, focusing on an object, meditation, or sharing your feelings with others. It is key you develop financial strategies, not out of fear, but through rational and purposeful thought.
Step 2: Review

Review between one and three months of your prior expenditures. Most Americans don’t keep a written budget or account for their expenses. When in a financial crisis you need to know what your needs are versus wants, or discretionary spending. Reviewing your household monthly transactions will tell you exactly how you spend your money. You can then classify items as needs or wants. Needs are those expenditures that help you meet the basic human requirements of food, shelter, clothing and medical care or supplies. Nearly everything else is a want. Even within the needs there are wants. For example, buying staple items at the grocery store is a need; getting Grubhub to bring you Taco Bell is a want.

In addition to your necessary expenses, you need to review what income and other financial resources you have. Make a list of what you have in your savings account, cash-on-hand, gift cards, etc. In every crisis, making a list of your resources helps you realize that you have tools that can help alleviate challenges.

Step 3: Plan

The key to planning is understanding that the value is in the process, not necessarily the final result. All plans change or need modification; the process of planning helps you focus on what needs to be done. It’s a lot like training for a marathon. Though training sessions don’t guarantee how you will finish, they help a runner get an idea of what will happen in the race.

I recommend thinking about planning in multiple timeframes: immediate, intermediate and long-term. Your immediate plan is how are you going to make it through the next two weeks to a month. The intermediate plan is how you expect to make it for the next two to six months. The long-term plan is beyond six months.

For your immediate plan, make sure you schedule out your income and expenses by day. Use a calendar or an app on your phone. You need to know exactly what your cash flow is at all times to avoid experiencing a secondary crisis. In addition, monitoring your income and spending will help you feel empowered in a turbulent time.

For your intermediate plan, you can look at weekly income and expenses. Try to forecast out irregular costs (car insurance, license plate renewal fees, etc.) and develop strategies to meet those needs. It is key to include all expenses in your plan.

The long-term plan is an extension of the intermediate plan that allows you to begin to strategize how to move beyond the current crisis and build financial security. You can identify ways of earning additional revenue, gain marketable skills and create savings to be better prepared for future crises.
Step 4: Implement

It doesn’t do any good to develop a plan if you don’t implement it. Implementation is the action phase of dealing with a crisis. If you aren’t acting on your plan, you’ll be reacting to each mini-crisis that comes up. You have the best knowledge and skills to deal with your current situation. Make sure you take the action you need to put your plan in motion.

Step 5: Monitor

The more acute your financial pressures are, the more diligent you need to be in monitoring your income and budget. You cannot afford to have surprises. If you haven’t done so, you need to use your bank or credit union’s app to monitor your daily activity. Make sure every expenditure was in your plan. Make sure your income is coming in as you expected. As your finances improve, you can reduce monitoring to every other day or a couple of times a week.

Step 6: Adapt

Adaptation requires two components: learning and initiative. As things change or if you experience a setback, do not let it paralyze you. Use the change or setback as a learning opportunity. Identify what specifically went wrong and create a strategy to address it in the future. After you have created the strategy, implement it. For example, if you went grocery shopping and spent more than you had budgeted, review what you purchased and decide if you can significantly reduce your costs for the next shopping trip by adding more bean and rice meals to your weekly plan.

Everyone experiences financial crises uniquely, and for that reason, how individuals cope with a crisis will vary. However, these six steps will set you on a course to tackle your unique financial circumstances and position yourself for success in the future.

Students interested in free financial coaching through the Sanford Center for Financial Planning and Wellness, can contact me via email or at (269) 760-1719.
Serving the community during the COVID-19 pandemic: My experience with Meals on Wheels

ZACHARY SPIEGLA, INTEGRATED SUPPLY MANAGEMENT STUDENT

As a student enrolled in WMU’s business ethics and sustainability class, I planned to complete 15 hours of service-learning with PeaceJam, an international organization with a mission to inspire youth through exposure to Nobel Peace laureates. My “plan” was to serve at WMU’s PeaceJam youth conference in March, where I was going to mentor children throughout the two-day event. Unfortunately, when COVID-19 started spreading throughout the country, the conference was postponed. So, there I was, halfway through the semester with no service-learning hours completed and no idea what organization could use my assistance.

While many opportunities to serve were “off limits” because of social distancing, one organization that desperately needed help was Senior Services of Southwest Michigan. They provide Meals on Wheels—a program that offers meals at home to those who can’t purchase or prepare their own—to help combat senior isolation and hunger. I quickly learned how the system of drivers and “hoppers” works. We volunteered in teams of two; one person drove the route, and the other, the hopper, took the meal to the individual. I had the privilege of being the hopper, and it was fantastic.

I was overwhelmed with how much gratitude I witnessed. The senior citizens I delivered meals to were always so happy to see me. The level of appreciation and excitement filled
my heart with joy. Truthfully, I was nervous at first. I did not know what to expect. If it wasn't for the driver, I would never have known where I was or how to get to the next residence. Despite these concerns, every time I dropped off another meal to an individual who could not leave their home, the smile on their face overcame my anxieties.

My ability to serve others who are not able to get out made this experience one I will never forget. Fears about COVID-19 surround all of us. Even volunteers are sometimes afraid to leave their homes. However, the need for drivers and hoppers at Meals on Wheels persists. When I look back on the spring of 2020, I will no doubt remember online classes. However, I will also remember how the Haworth College of Business gave me the chance to serve others during this time of need.